

Broadcasting your product narrative

Once you have a narrative for your product, you have to share it. But what's the right way to do that?

Prioritizing your audiences

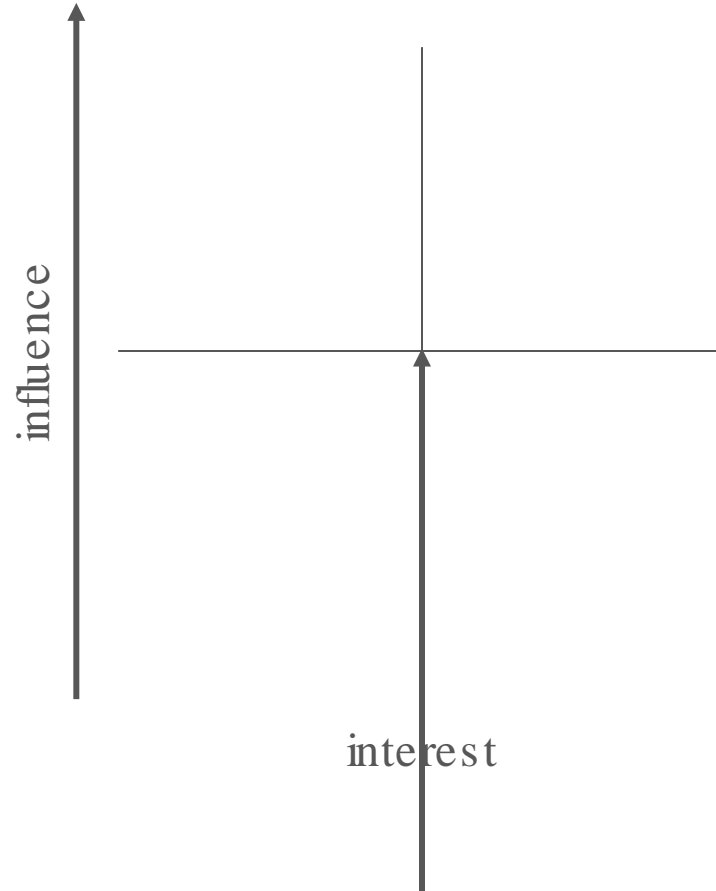
**How you talk about your product,
and what parts of the product you
talk about, depends on who you're
talking to.**

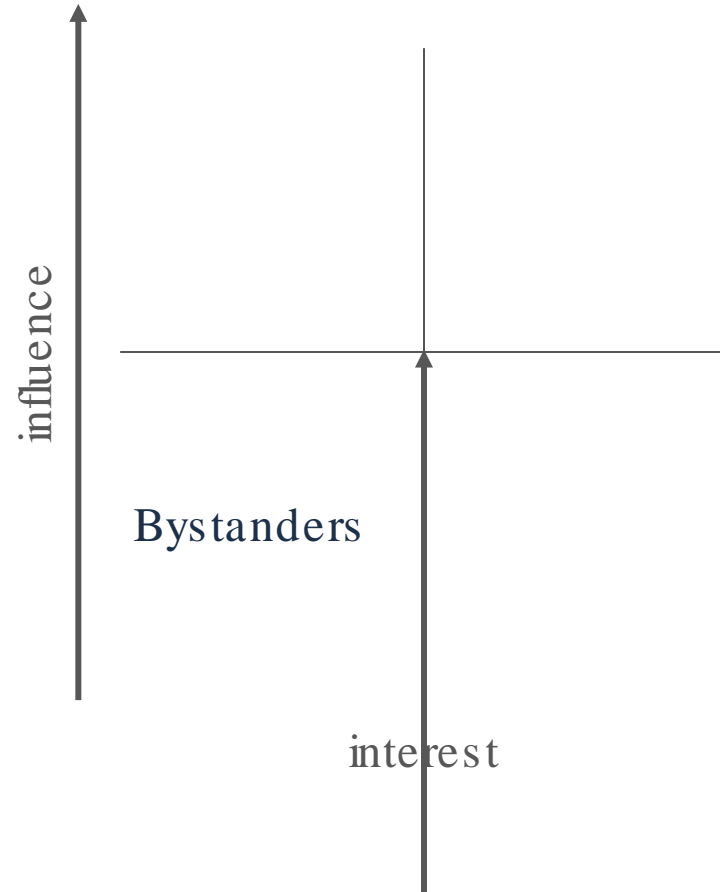
How you talk about your product,
and what parts of the product you
talk about, depends on who you're
talking to. **That's easy when they're
standing right in front of you... but
they usually aren't.**

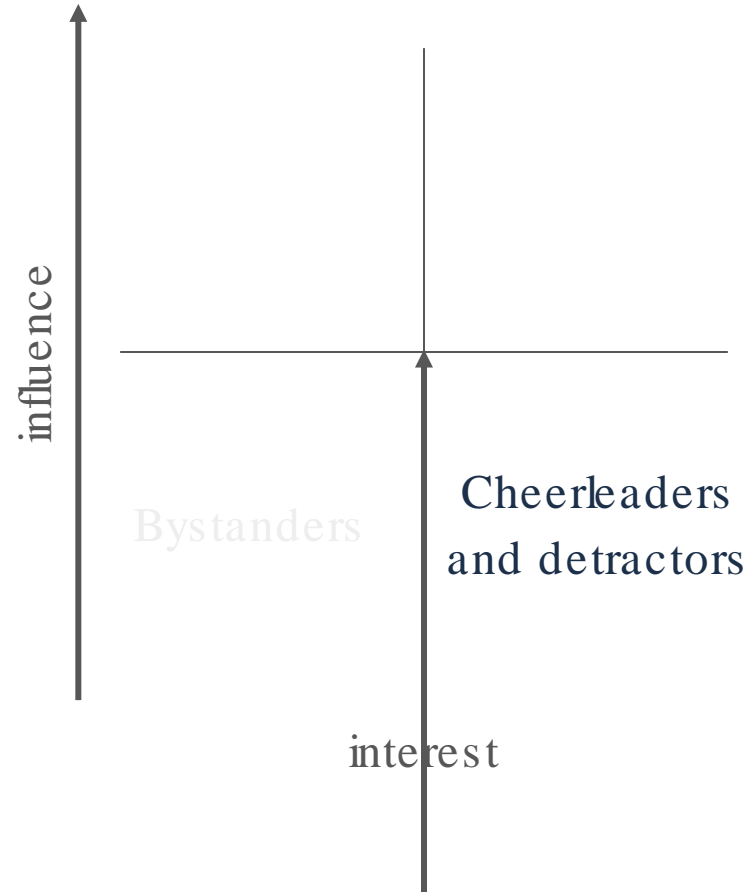
So, you have to figure out who your core audience is.

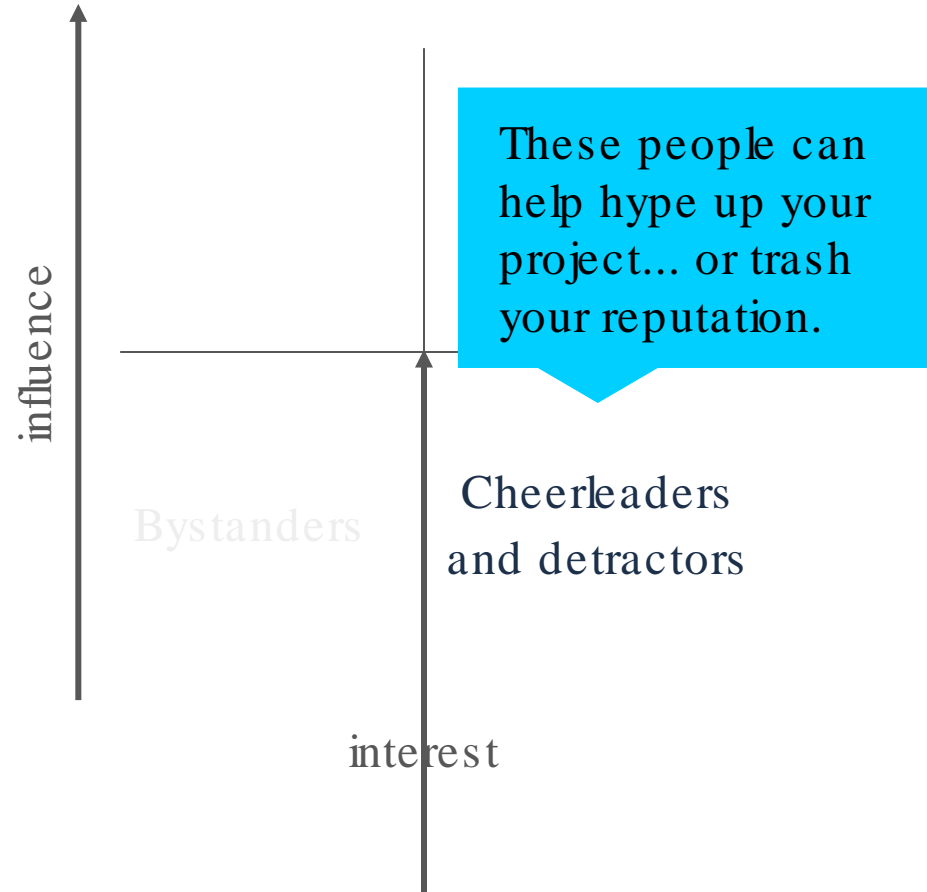
It helps to map out everyone who might belong to that group.

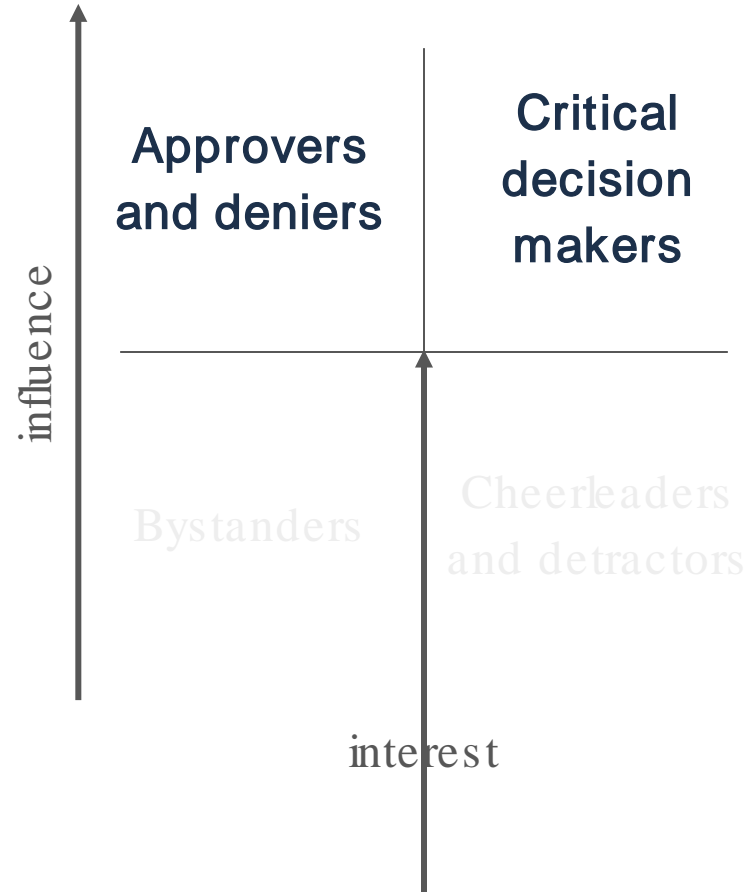
Look at who has **influence**.

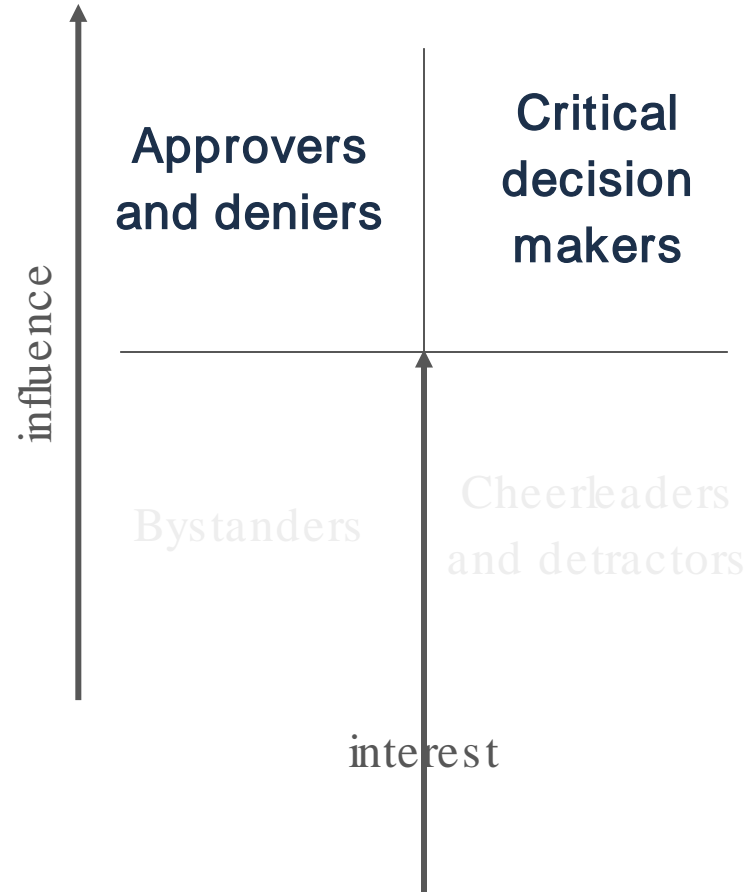






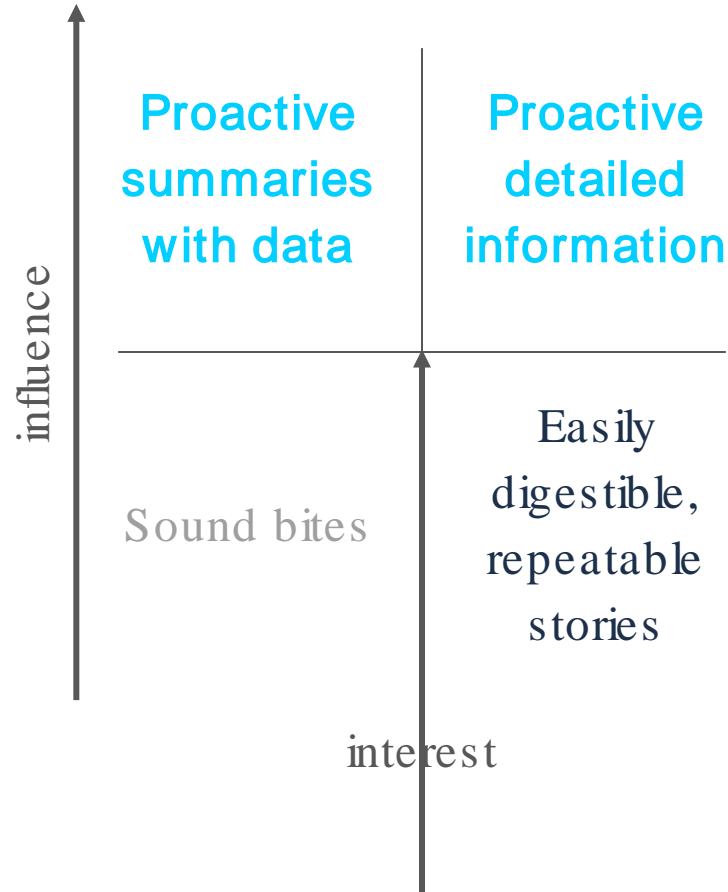




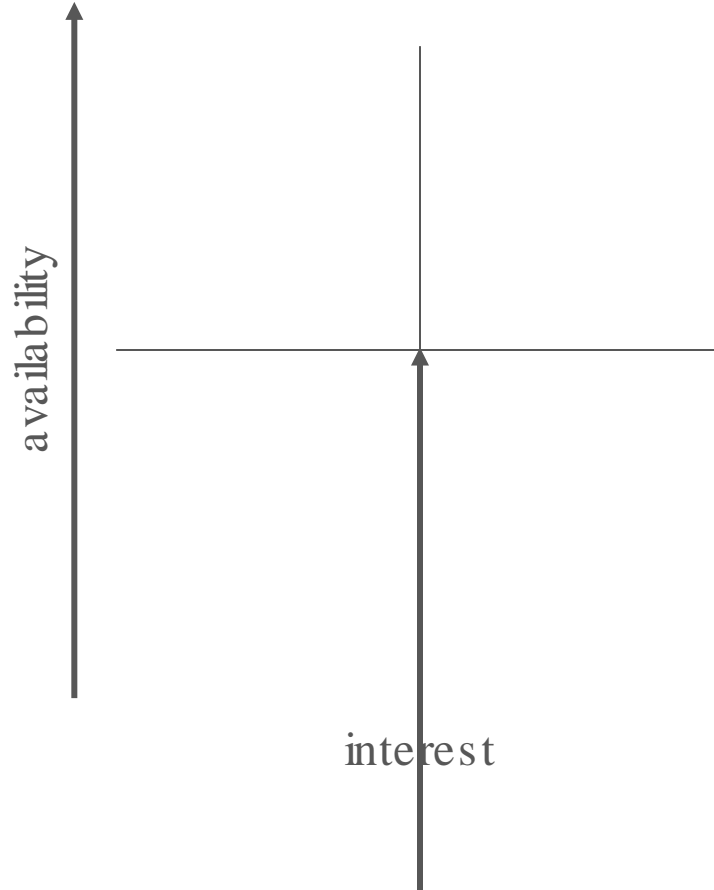


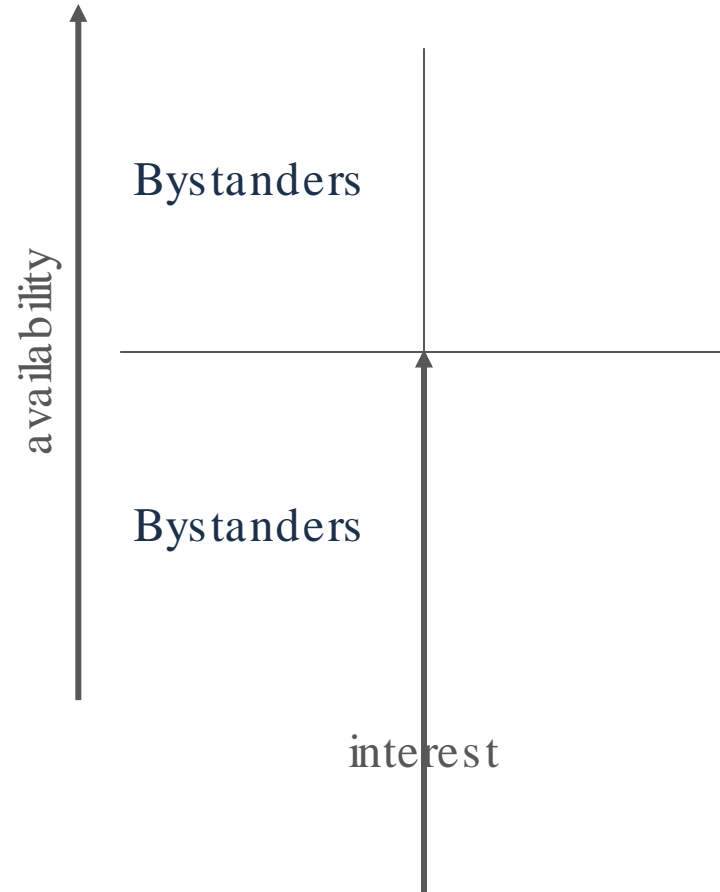
You **need** these folks to buy in.

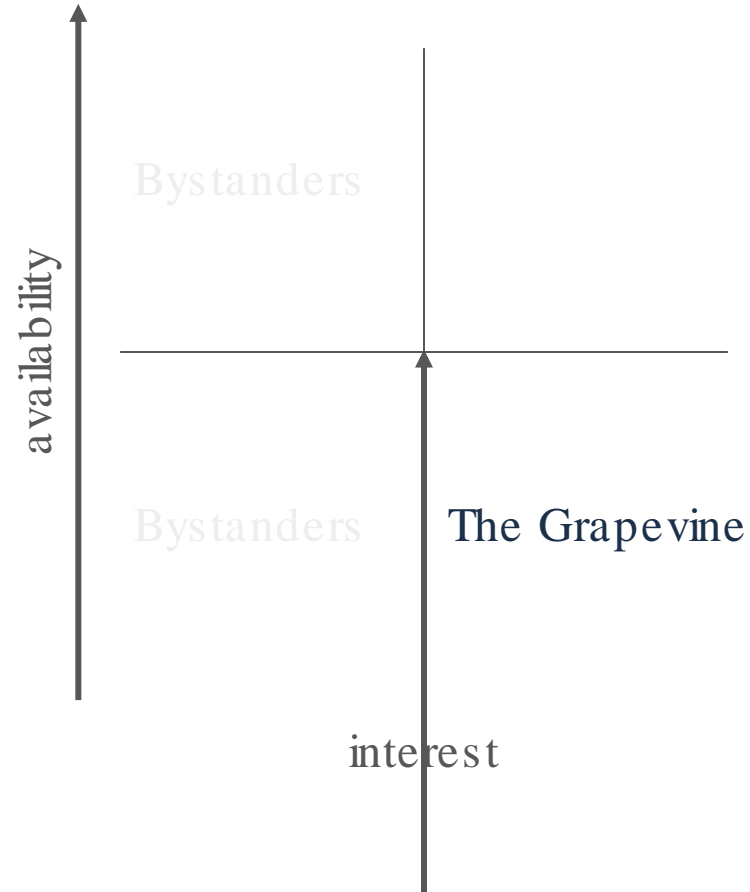
And share accordingly:

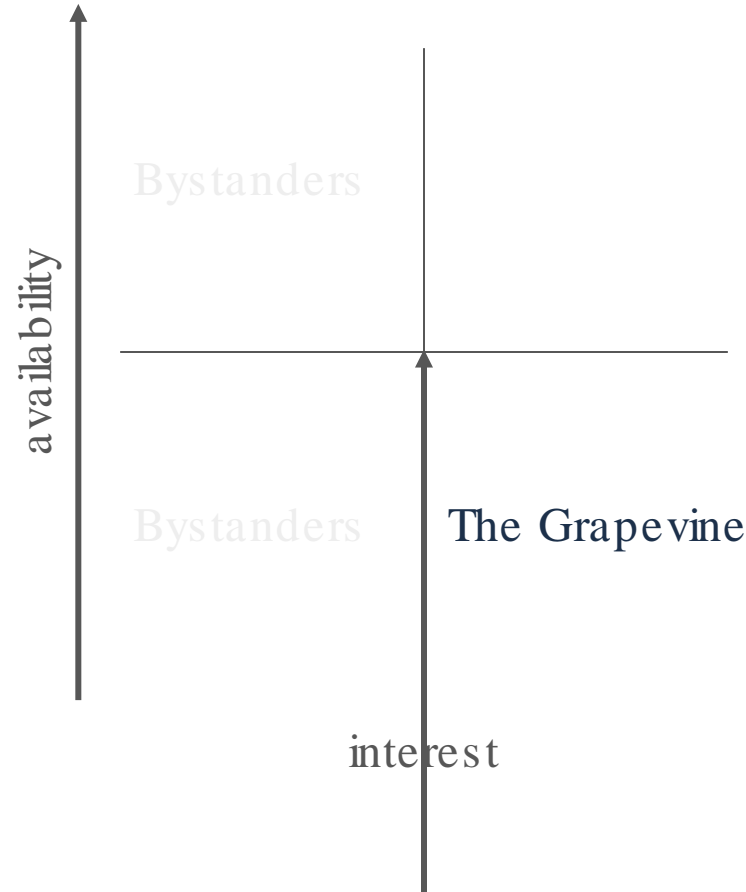


It's also helpful to look at **availability**.

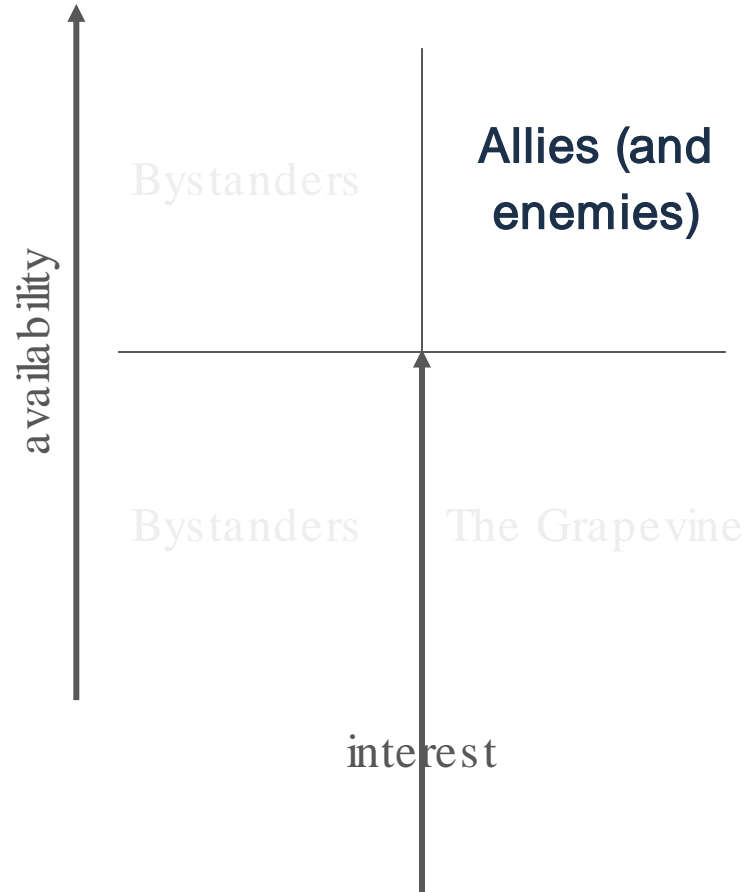




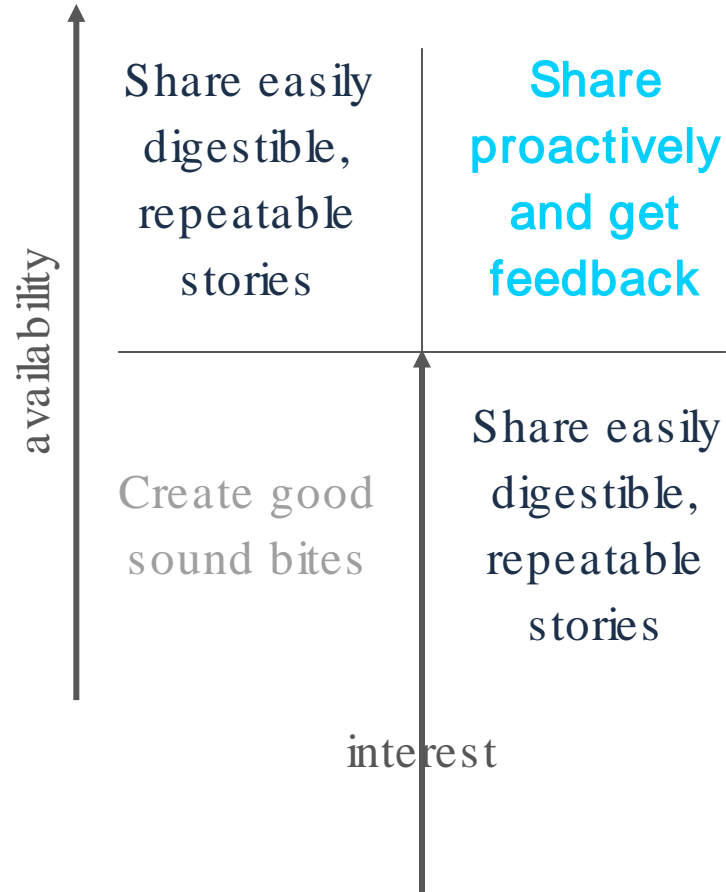




These people care, but don't have time to find (or scrutinize) information about your project.



These folks have the bandwidth to really help (or hurt) you.



discussion

Who's your audience?

Who are the decision makers? Who are the advisors and influencers?

How much are they interested in your project?

Who are your allies? Who's still a little skeptical?

How your audience perceives you

**The exact same phrase on your
Twitter account and your website
gets read (at least) two different
ways.**

The medium shapes the message.

Anything where people can see what you're doing — and form an impression of you — counts.

**Some examples: the main website,
public code repositories, project
social media accounts, lightning
talks about the project, local paper
thinkpieces, the inside of the office,
team member's GitHub accounts...**

Each communication channel has a different tone and inferred level of formality.

demo video



press release

formality





You also have a different amount of **control** over each communication channel.

Some channels you own. Others you can only distantly influence.



agency website

control



newspaper
article




end user word
of mouth



Choosing your medium

Every communication channel lends itself to certain kinds of content. And you can map out how interactive that content is.



interactive

non-interactive



More engaging,
but also more
overhead.



In general, dynamic content is more engaging for your audience. It's also more work to create.

The hard part is balancing effort and payoff. Effort spent on telling your story is effort not being spent directly building your product — so make it count!

Practice

Imagine you're leading a generic project, with three main target audiences:

- * legislative bodies**
- * internal leadership**
- * the end users you're building for**

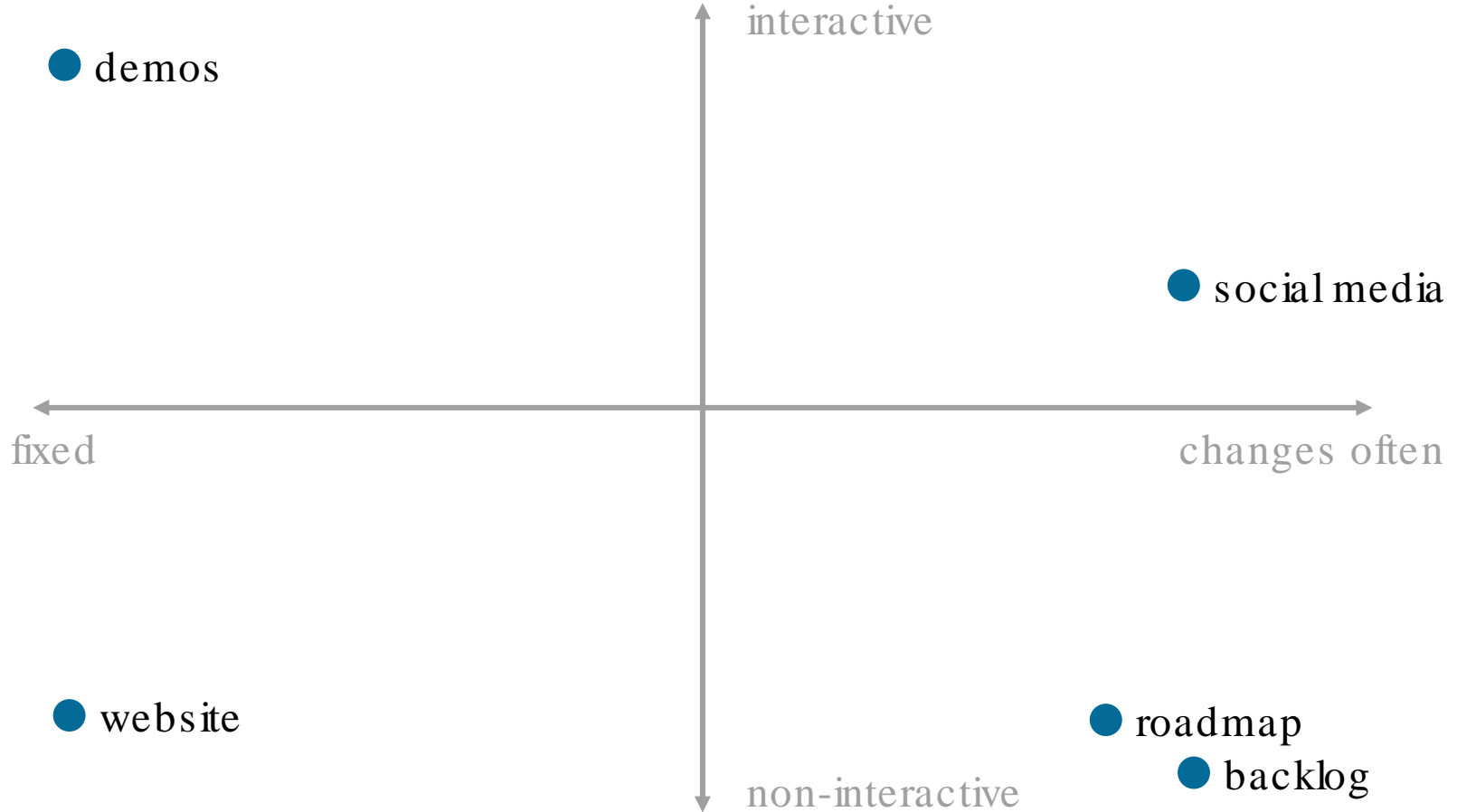
And some secondary audiences:

- * internal oversight
- * other teams on the project
- * the general public

**You have a few basic
communication channels by default:
your project roadmap, your project
backlog, and periodic demos.**

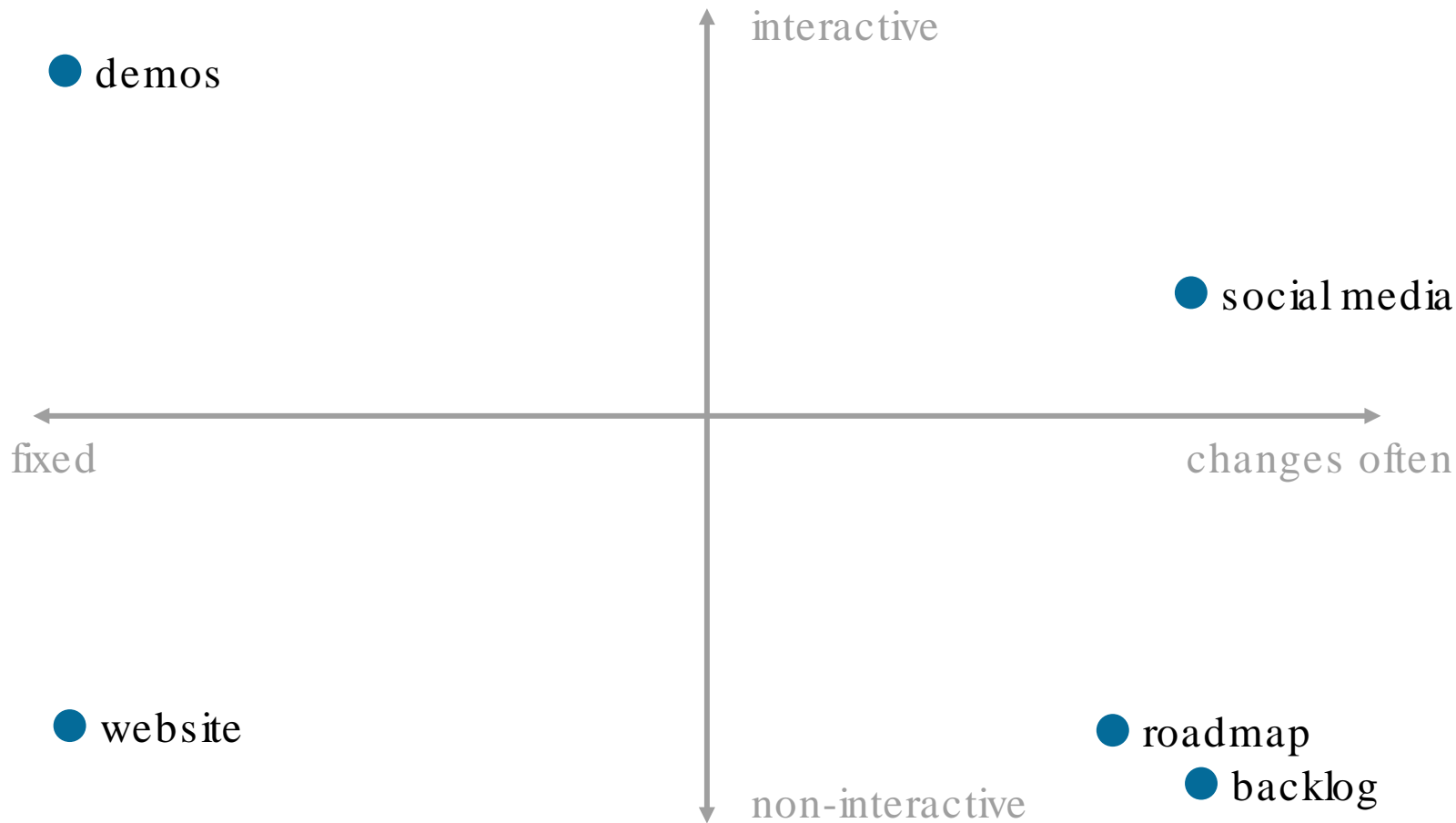
And you can easily add some traditional web presence, like a project website and some social media (maybe a Twitter account).

Project comms channels

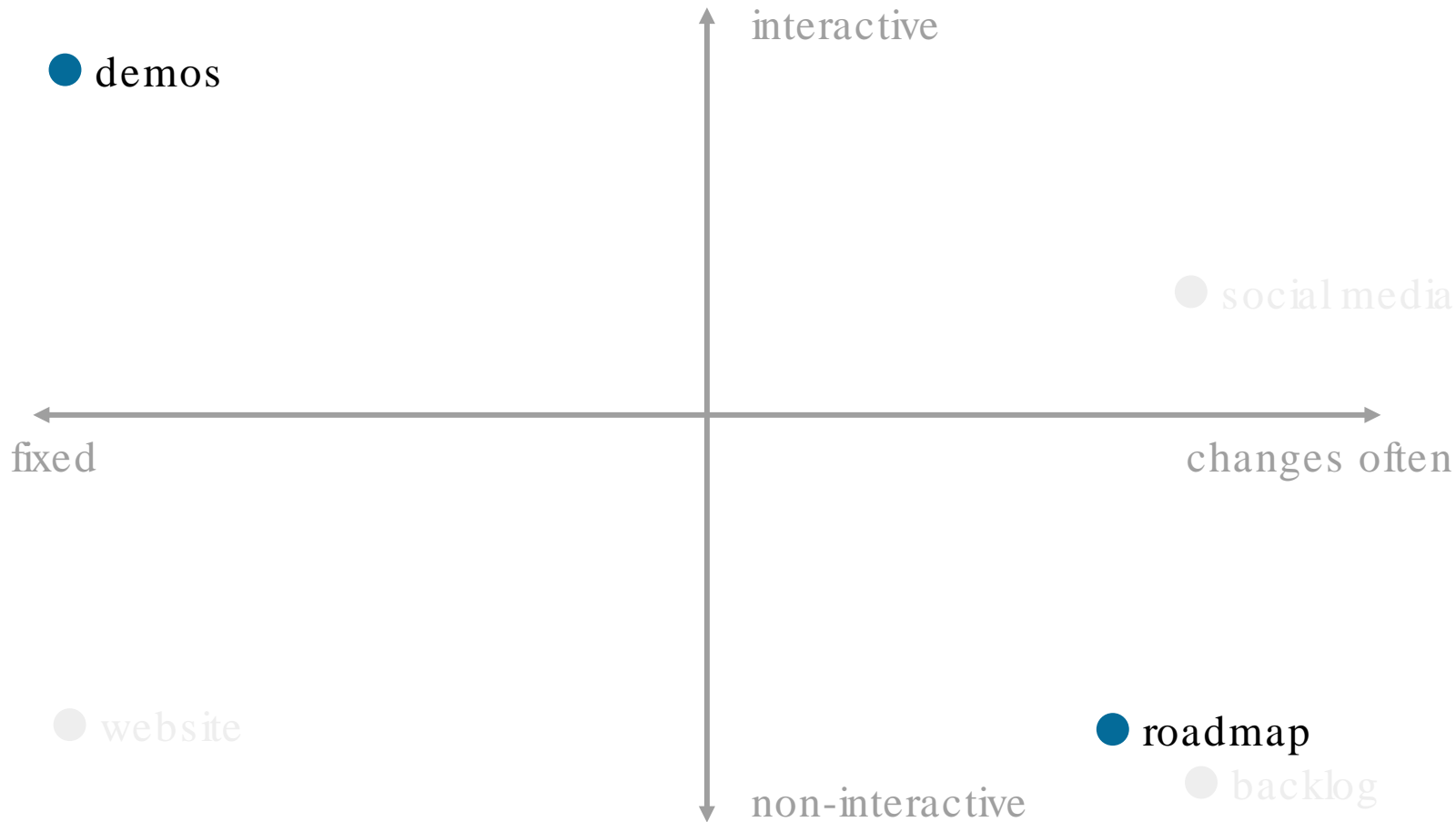


Which of these channels are analysts (who influence legislators) going to find useful? What do they want to learn through those channels?

For legislators

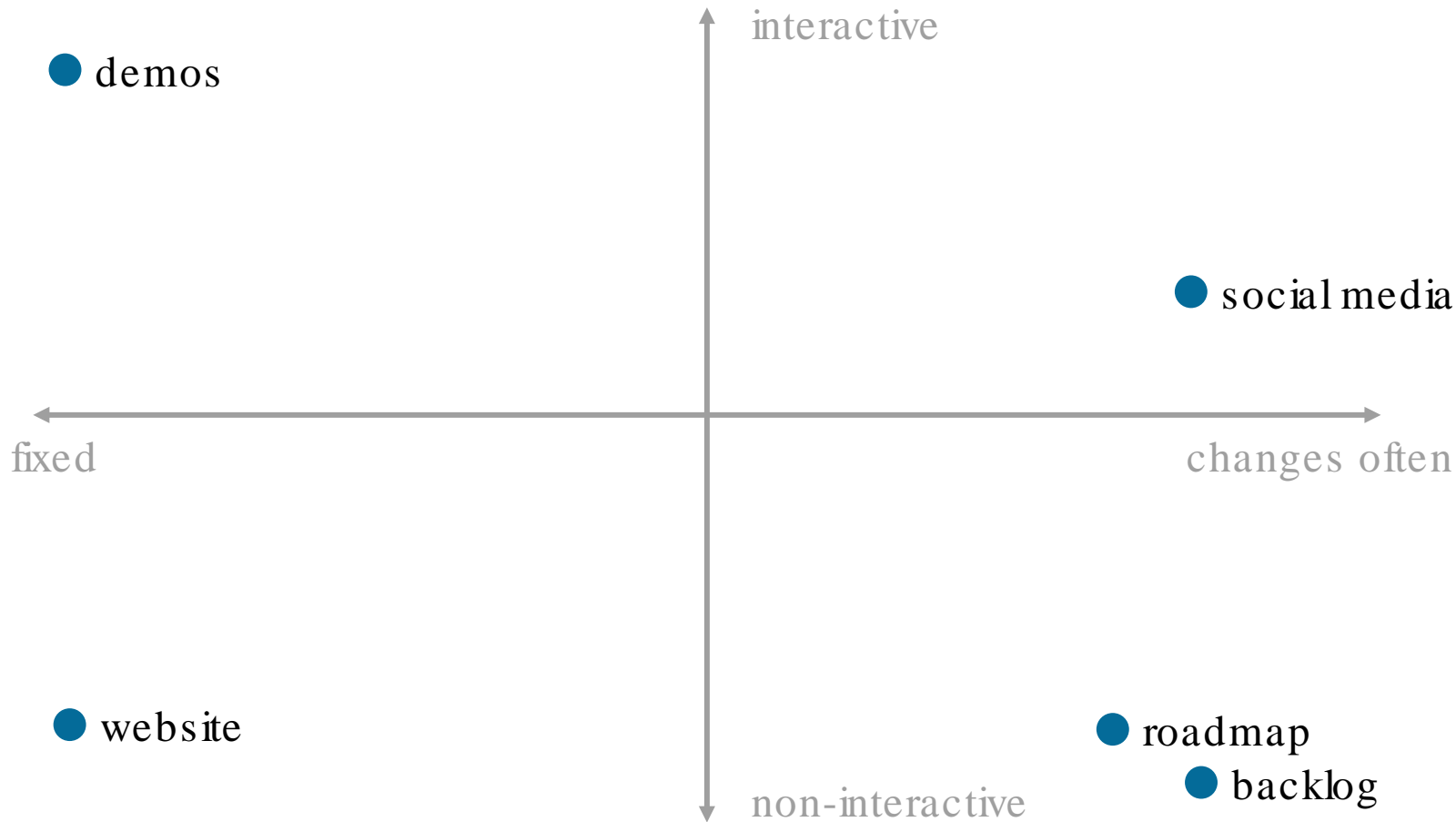


For legislators

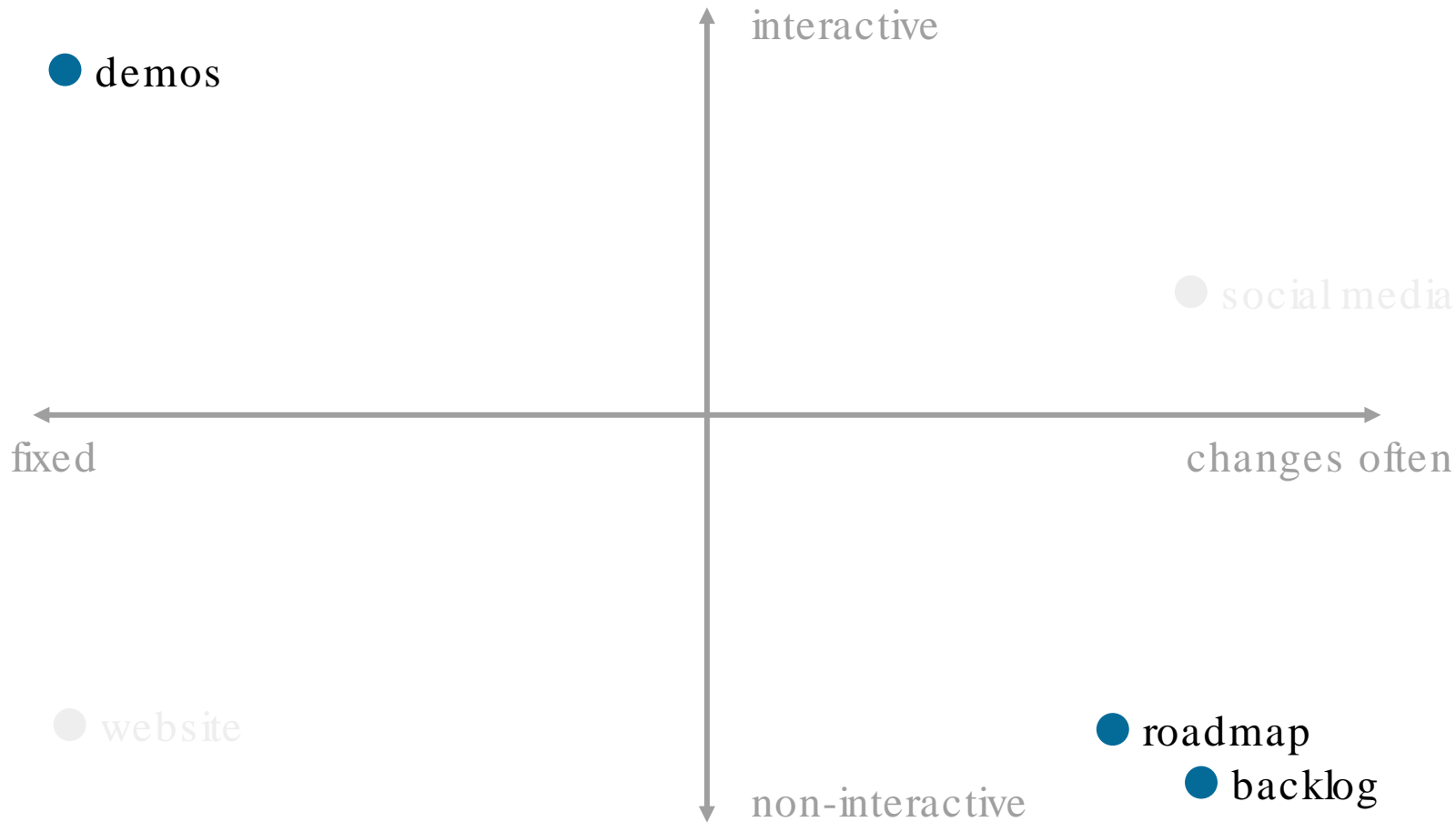


What about your internal leadership team? What will they pay attention to? What do they need to know?

For internal leadership

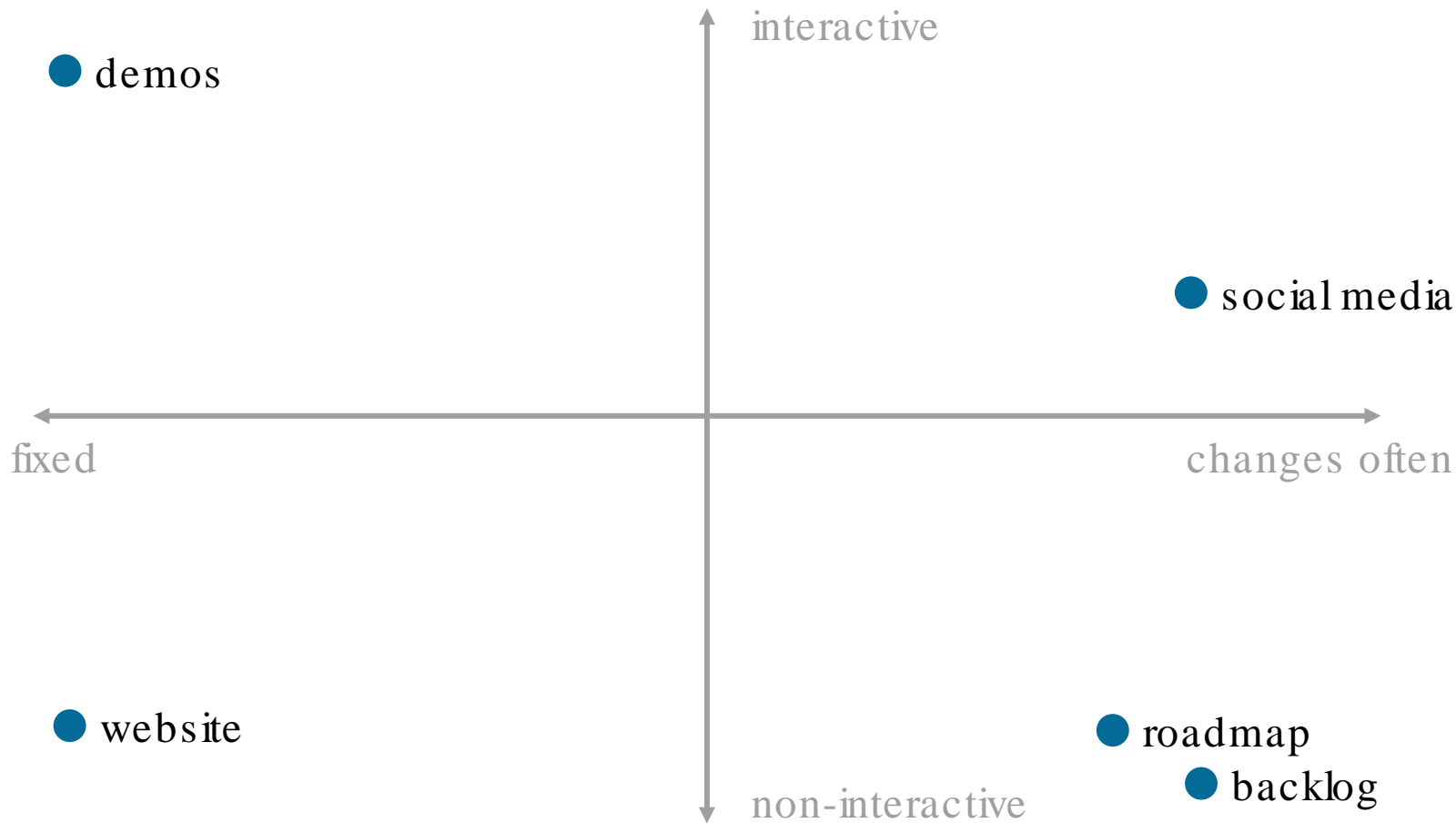


For internal leadership

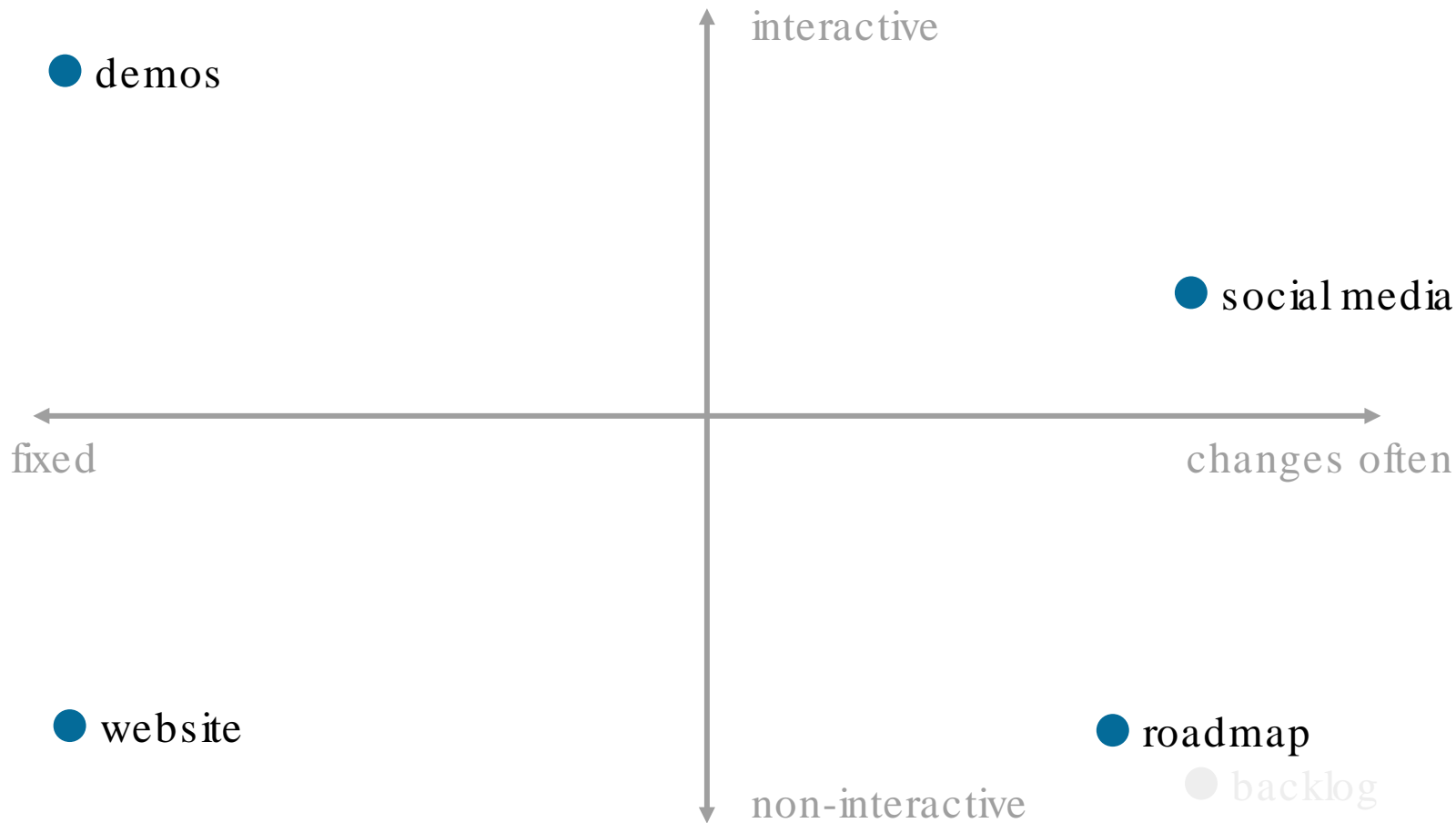


How about your end users? What are they likely to look at? What do they need to know?

For end users

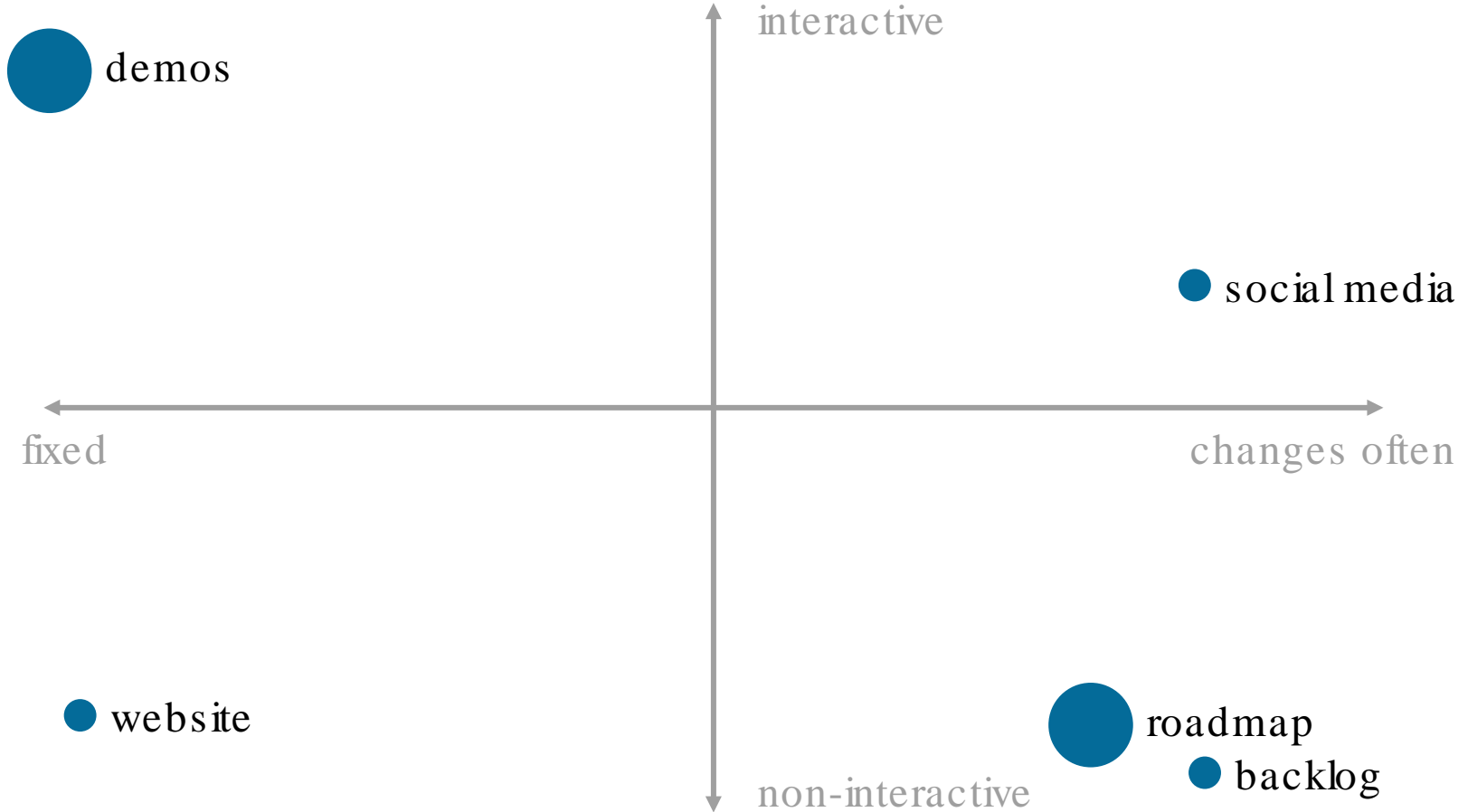


For end users

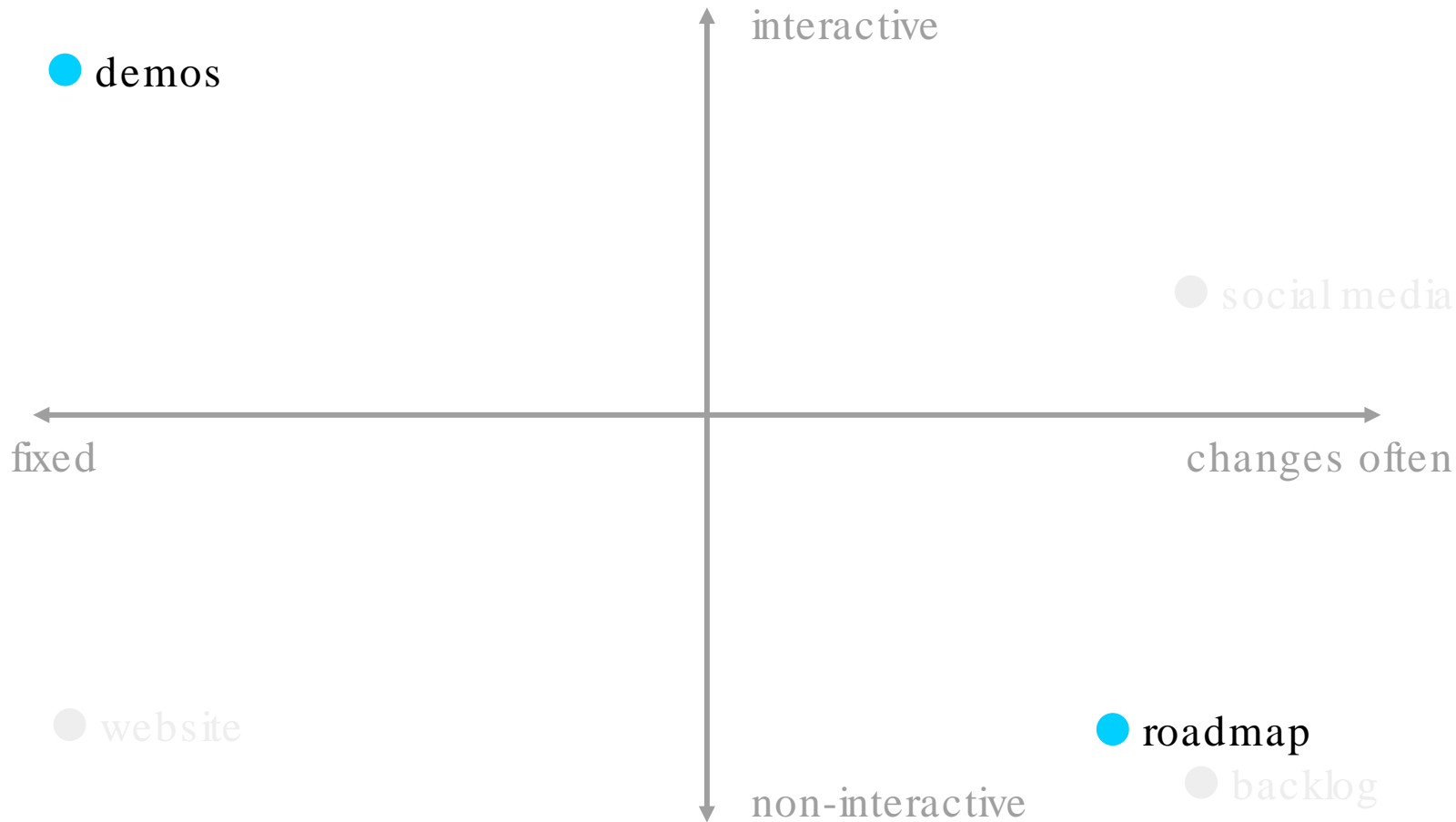


**Where can we double down on
specific channels to reduce
overhead?**

Audiences reached

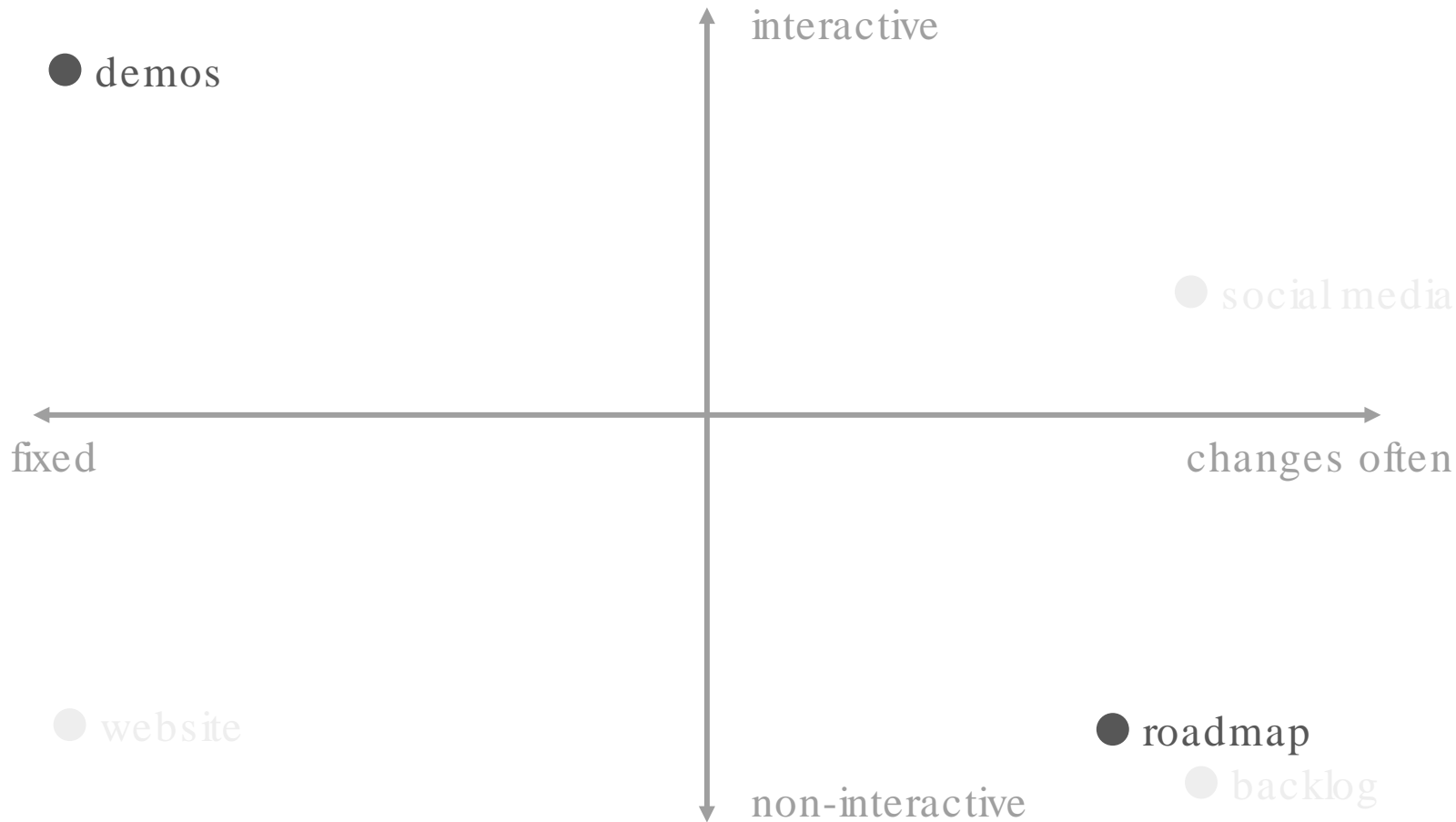


High-value channels

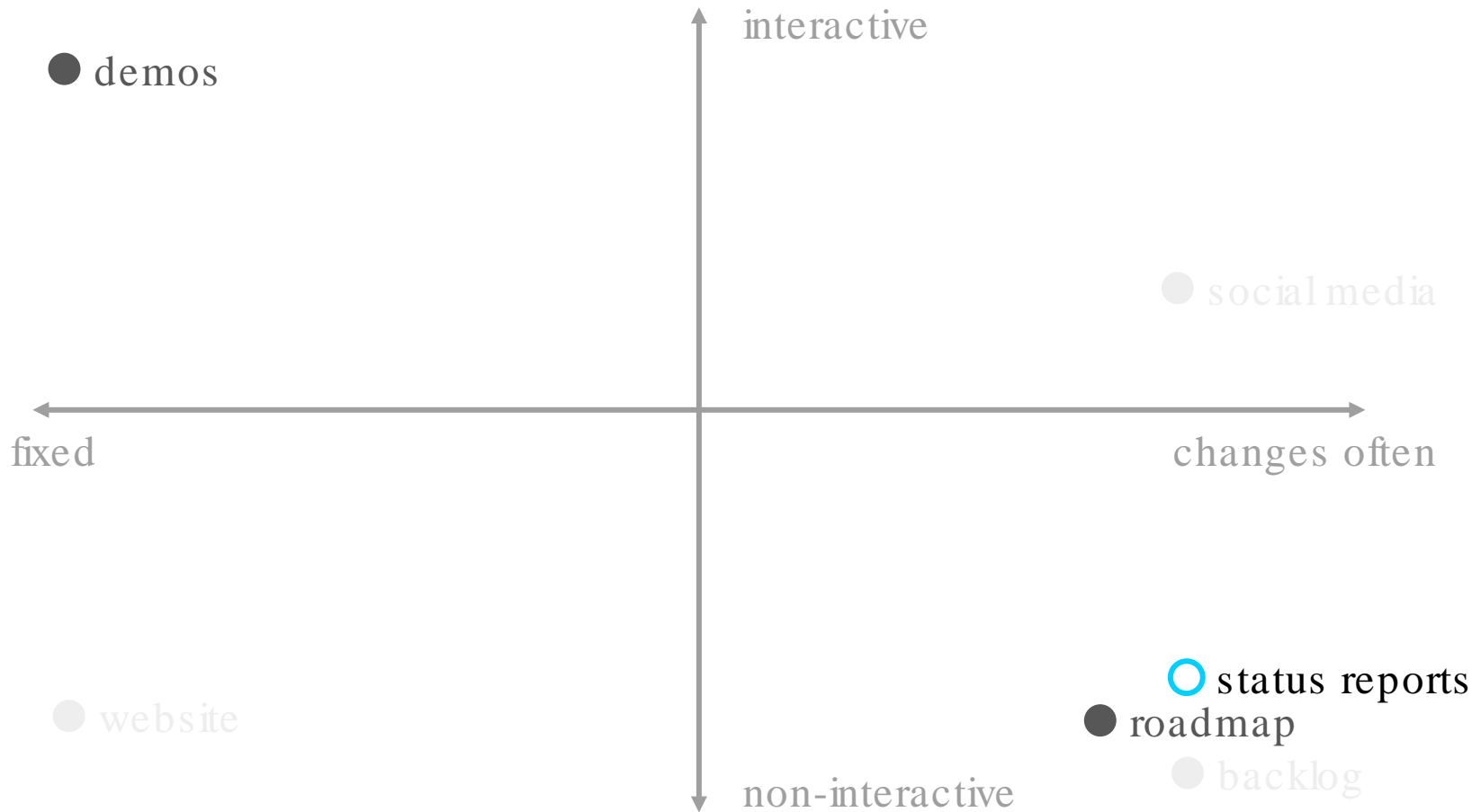


Is there anything missing?

Supplemental comms

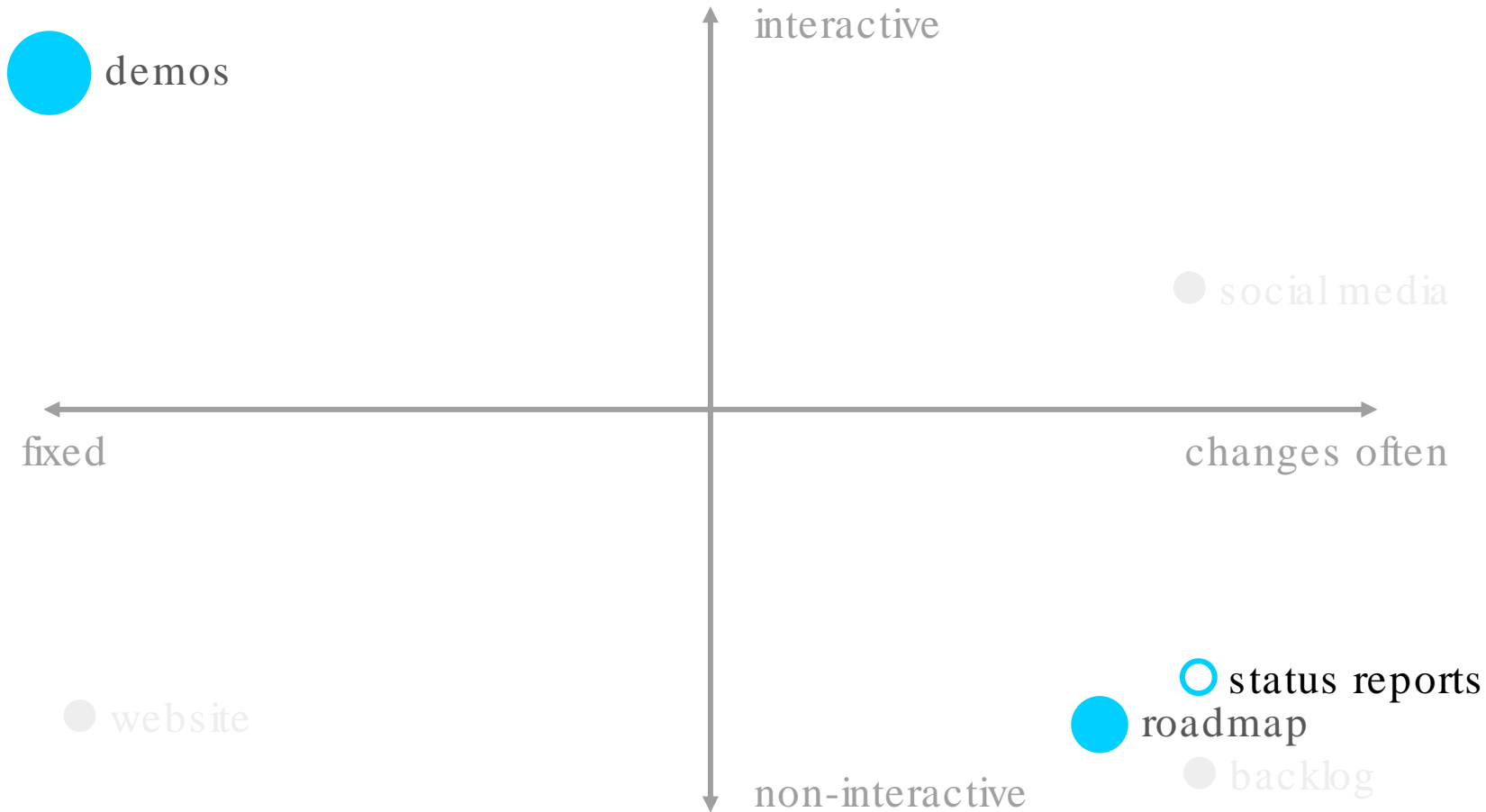


Supplemental comms



Stitching all of that together gives us a set of strategic communication channels.

Strategic channels



Stitching all of that together gives us a set of strategic communication channels. **Combine that with our core message, and we have the makings of an overarching communication strategy.**

discussion

What are your channels?

What communication channels are available to you?

Which ones do you own? Which ones are out of your control?

Who listens to each channel?

What is each channel normally used for? What expectations do people have when they go there?

What is your most important communication channel? Your top 3?

Crafting a product narrative

The principles of pitching

**In the world of Venture Capital,
everyone has to pitch for funding.**

A good pitch answers two questions:

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1. **Why should I care** about what you're trying to do?

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1. Why should I care about what you're trying to do?
2. **Why should I trust you** to get it done?

**You are pitching every single time
that you interact with someone who
influences your budget, headcount,
user adoption, whatever.**

1\

Motivating the problem

Your audience has to believe that the problem you're solving is worthwhile.

Your audience has to believe that the problem you're solving is worthwhile. You also have to convince them that **your solution** to that problem is noteworthy.

Problem:

It's hard to get potable water after major natural disasters.

Solution:

Start a vlog to rate different water filters.

Problem:  **Yes!**

It's hard to get potable water after major natural disasters.

Solution:

Start a vlog to rate different water filters.

Problem:

It's hard to get potable water after major natural disasters.

Solution:  No.

Start a vlog to rate different water filters.

A compelling problem is **necessary but not sufficient**. You also need a compelling solution.

So... why should anyone care about what you're trying to do?

2\

Proving yourself (and your team)

**Your vision doesn't mean anything if
you don't make it real.**

**vision that
inspires**



**optimistic but
believable plan**



**compelling
design**



**something that
feels real**







**you will almost certainly have to
teach people what progress looks
like**

User research is progress. Design sketching is progress. Prototypes are progress. Infrastructure is progress. Hiring is progress.

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Anything that gets you closer to your goal is progress.

It's up to you to explain **why.**

Practice

How is each of these things progress?

- Synthesizing 3 weeks of user research
- Spending a month paying off technical debt
- Deploying code to an integration environment
- Hosting a core user roundtable
- Usability testing a prototype
- Hiring a new product manager
- Writing a blog post about the project
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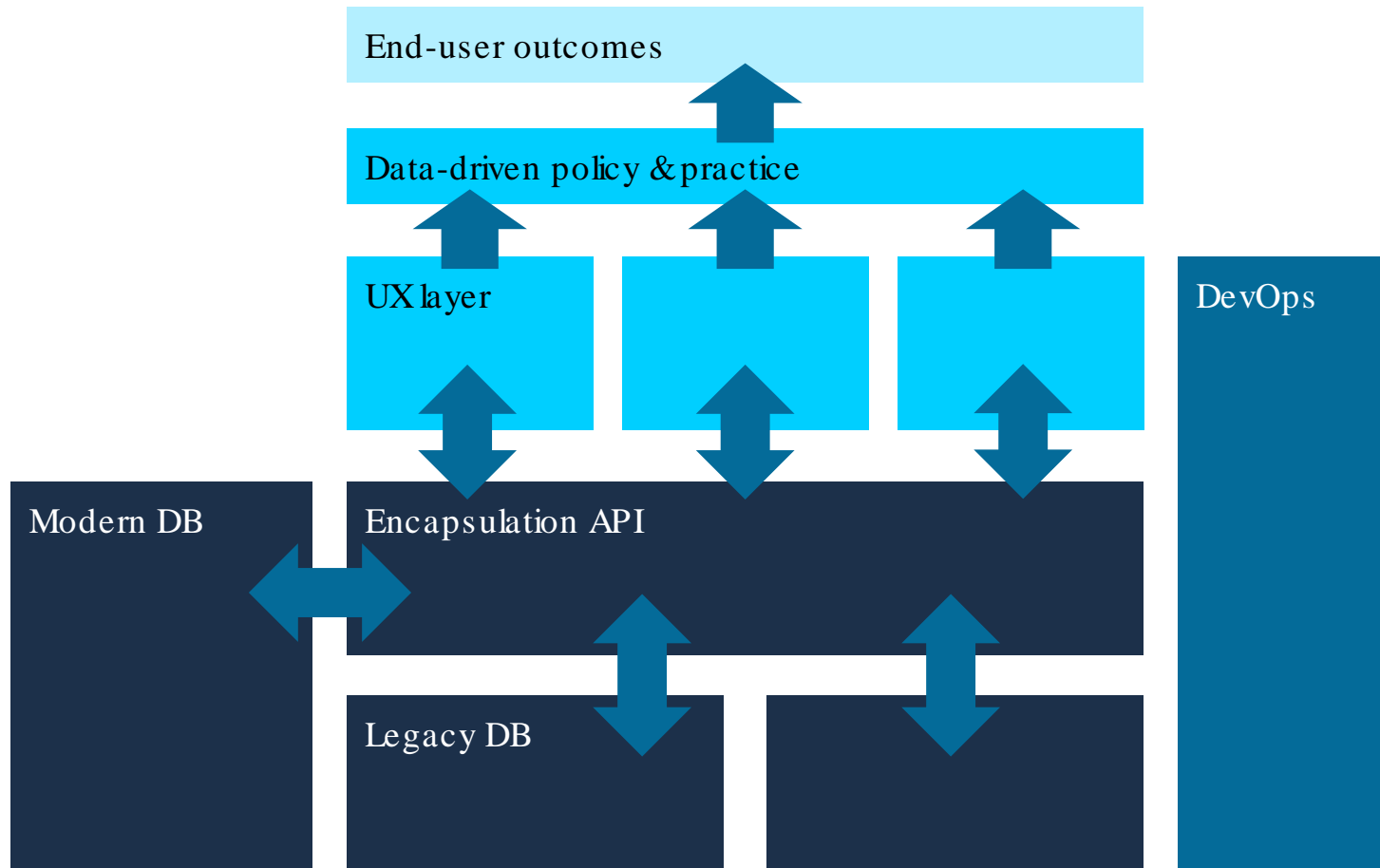
The right pieces of the story

Everyone you talk to cares about a different part of the project.

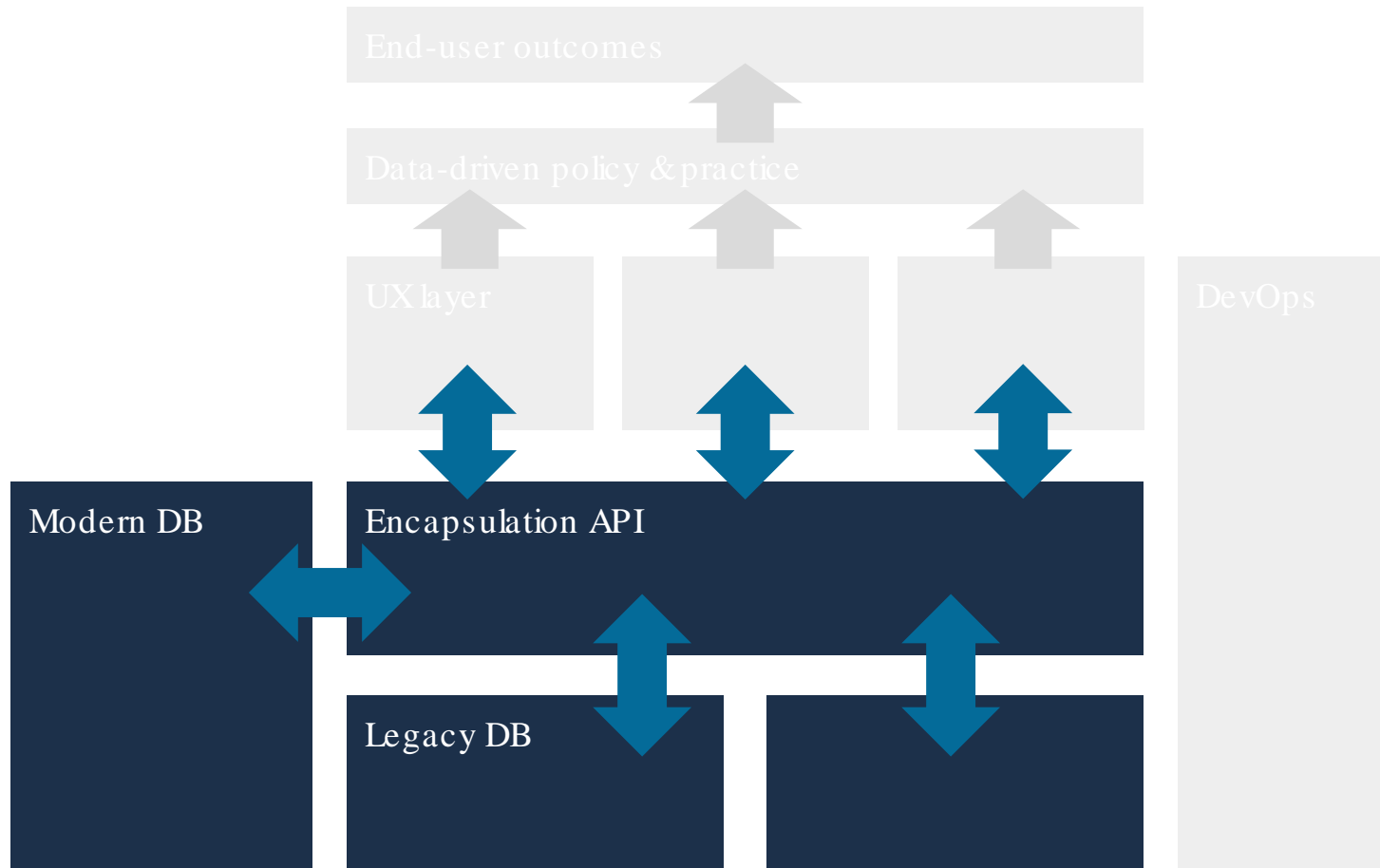
Everyone you talk to cares about a different part of the project. You need to lead with what *they* care about.

Everyone you talk to cares about a different part of the project. You need to lead with what *they* care about. **You also have to make sure that all the pieces line up.**

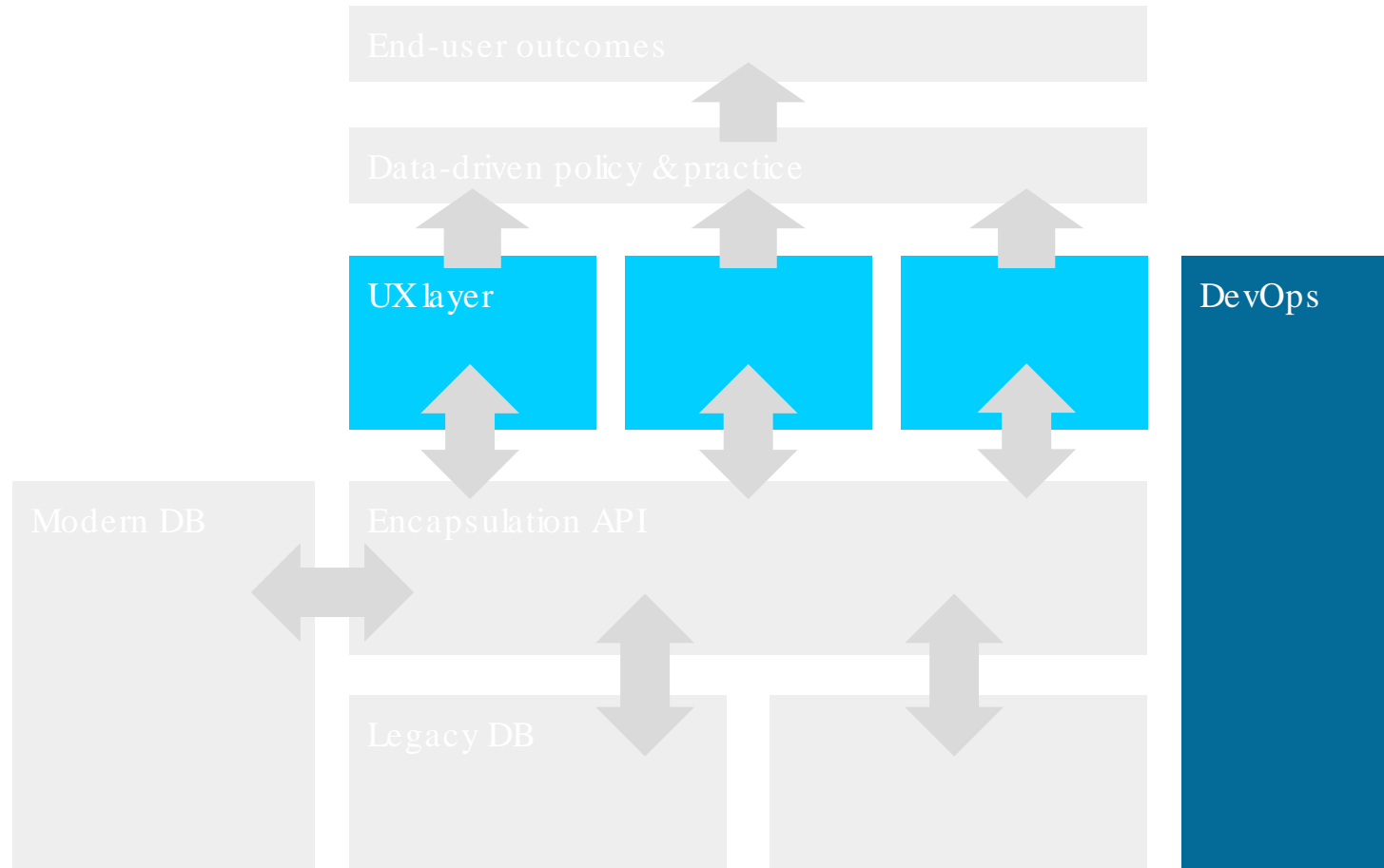
Imagine you're modernizing a legacy system...



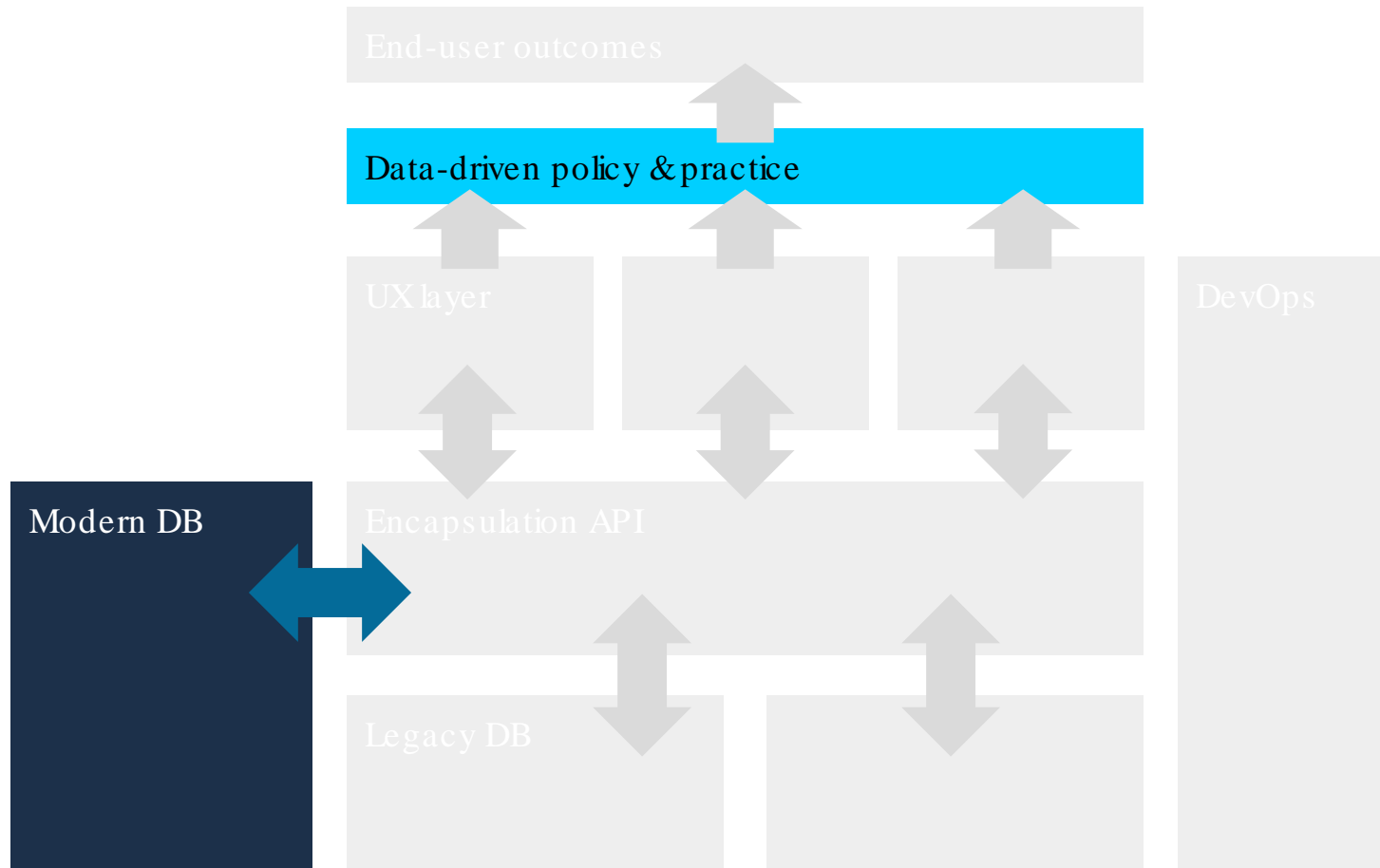
Some folks care most about the efficiency and reliability that comes from better technical infrastructure.



Others are interested in continuously deploying better and better user experiences.



Some care most about how the system will support policy (and practice).



It's all the same story.



No matter what parts of the system
your audience is interested in, the
story adds up.

**No matter who does the talking, the
story adds up.**

Practice

discussion

Who cares about your product?

What about it interests them?

- Agency leadership?
- Legislators?
- Adjacent agencies?
- Oversight bodies?
- Unrelated agencies?
- Local residents?
- US citizens?
- Non-citizen residents?
- Local press?
- National press?

Visibility and continuous updates

Winning support isn't a one-time process; you must constantly work to keep sponsors and supporters bought in.

One of the most important ways to do that is to let them **see how the project is going.**

It can be uncomfortable to let people see the rough edges of your project as you build... but they can't help you if they don't know what's happening.

Transparency isn't enough

That doesn't mean you can send them a link to your backlog, dial them into your sprint demos, and call it good.

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Transparency isn't the same as understandability.

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Efficient, effective communication

This doesn't mean that you should spend all of your time sharing outwards about the project.

This doesn't mean that you should spend all of your time sharing outwards about the project. **Instead, focus on high-impact messages.**

Who wants to know about your progress? Who **needs** to know?

What do they need to know?

**What do you want from them?
Feedback? Resources? Air cover?**

Breaking down the message

The formula is pretty simple...

useful data
clear requests
+ smart framing

the right message

useful data

Share info that they
can use.

useful data
clear requests

**Tell them what you
need them to do.**

useful data
clear requests
+ **smart framing**

**Tell them in a way
they'll understand.**